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sources

a publication of multi-faith chaplaincy

Rhythm as Language

Each person playing an instrument makes a special magic. So many things to say... so many ways to say them. If not for the drum, I'm not sure I'd be spiritual at all" – (excerpt from Sacred Beat)

I started drumming when I was about sixteen. Young and disenchanted with the politics of high school and the pressure of looming decisions, I found my place behind the drums. I took a few lessons and practice time quickly became ritual: Every day after school I went to the basement and sat down with my drums. I had managed to carve out this sacred time and space where my head, heart and body were one; put in synch and articulated through rhythm.

Ultimately, drumming was a means to express myself.

Eventually I branched out into communal drumming. I played in a number of bands over the years where I learned to communicate with others musically. What a revelation! That same feeling of connectedness that I experienced within myself while playing the drums became a shared experience of expression. Each instrument had a contribution to make to the whole. It was like having a great conversation, only without words.

Although the bands didn't last, the practice of shared musical experience has continued in the form a drum circle. Nowadays I can be found in the basement (!) of Multi-faith Chaplaincy, leading students in rhythm with hand drums (djembes). And it is in this setting where I really came to understand rhythm as language; drumming as artful conversation.

Each drum has a voice and it is up to the holder of it to know what to say and when to say it. Just as a group of ten people cannot all speak at once and be heard, a group of ten people with drums cannot either. It would be chaos. The group has to work together in order for the conversation (or rhythm) to flow.

Oftentimes as soon as people are given a drum they tend to just start whacking away at it. For many of us it would seem that the most important part of conversation is in the talking. While speaking is essential, if we are not mindful of our words and our audience, we quickly lose touch with the others around us. This is why the most important part of playing rhythm together is actually listening. How else can we know how to respond and add to the conversation if we're not listening to what the people around us are saying? And therein is what I love most about drum circle.

It's one of the few instances in life where everyone in the circle must be treated as equals, where everyone has something to say and is given opportunity to say it, and where human collaboration occurs naturally—at its most basic nonverbal level. And it creates something beautiful! Surely this is what community is all about.

Laura Gallo
Interfaith facilitator

Programs Offered by Multi-faith Chaplaincy

Drum Circles with Laura Gallo
Tuesdays from 1:00-2:00 PM in Z-05

Mother Hubbard's Cupboard
Thursdays from 5:00-7:00 PM, Z-105/06
January 6 to April 14, 2011.

Stories that Light our Path with Ellie Hummel
Mondays, 12:45 - 2:00 PM, Z-02

Prayer, Spirituality and Eucharist with Fr. Paul Anyidoho
Thursdays from Noon to 1:00 PM in the Loyola Chapel.

Catholic Students Association
Wednesdays from 12:30 PM to 2:00 PM, Z-05
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - Tuesdays from 3:00 to 4:00 PM in the Loyola Chapel

Pizza & Parsha with Rabbi Yisroel
Thursdays from 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM, AD 130

Zen Meditation with Myōkyō
Wednesdays 10:45 to Noon, Z-05

Insight (Vipassana) Meditation with Daryl Ross
Thursdays from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM, in the Loyola Chapel

Baha'i Devotional Discussions with Ilona Weinstein
Date & Time TBA

Ellie's Notes...

This machine", the salesperson said to me, "has a Core i3 Processor, 6 GB RAM, a 5-in-1 card reader, 500GB hard drive, while this one has a Core2 Duo processor, more RAM, but a smaller hard drive and..." The words all seem to blend together and I start to tune out. I just need a new computer and all I want to know is if there is enough space to save all my pictures, music and videos, whether I can have six programs open at the same time and if the machine runs my favourite programs reliably. But instead, I seem to get this garble of techno-speak which leaves me frustrated and confused and nowhere closer to making a decision about my new computer. I mumble something about needing to think about it and walk out of the store. It is curious, isn't it, that even though we seem to speak the same language, the words the sales person uses seem to have no meaning. The sales person might as well speak a foreign language.

As I reflect on this experience, I begin to wonder what words I use which have the same effect on people as the sales person on me. Maybe people have a similar experience when they come into Chaplaincy and ask what this department is about. My response is often something like, "We are a department helping students around issues of spirituality, faith, religion, ethics and values." I wonder how many people tune out and when they hear these words, because those words actually have no meaning for them. Or worse yet, these words – spirituality, religion — faith, conjure up images of conflict, limitations and rules, whereas for me, these words invoke images of peace, serenity, community and social justice.

Sometimes, language seems like such a barrier. Instead of using words, I would like to invite people to come on in and experience what we do; to get a feel for Chaplaincy. Come to one of our famous *Mother Hubbard's Cupboard* meals, share in a sacred dialogue, meditate, do yoga, talk to one of our staff, pray, or simply find stillness and just be.

And yet, words and language also offer amazing opportunities. They are doorways to understanding, beauty and right relations. I think of deep conversations I have shared with students and colleagues, where words brought a sense of community, even though at times we had to work hard to hear each other. I recall sacred texts, which centre me when I read them: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) or "I have called you that you may have life and have it in all abundance" (John 10:10). I think of lectures where words challenged me and made me rethink my assumptions and my biases. I think of encounters, like the one with the computer sales person and many others, where I learned something new. I only need to be open and willing to learn.

And maybe that is the challenge of it all. We need to understand the complexity of language: its beauty and harshness, its power and simplicity, its complexity and context, its strength and opportunity. In this issue of *sources*, we invite you to reflect on words and language through articles, poems, reflections and images. We also pose the challenge to reflect on the words you use, to consider the words that make you tune out and to learn continually about the meaning behind the words we hear. Language is a powerful tool and we have the choice to use it to the best of our abilities and as a stepping stone to peace and understanding.

Ellie Hummel

Chaplain

Language and the Loyola Chapel

I am involved in the process of defining the evolving identity of the Loyola Chapel to become more inclusive and available to the diverse needs of the Concordia community without compromising its heritage. In redefining the space, I see the importance of looking at the language of that space, including the name 'Loyola Chapel'. I recognize the delicate process that this involves, as names carry an identity and history, along with possible concerns that the old identity and history would be lost with a new name. But could the history be lost?

History continues to live on in the hearts, minds, and shared experiences of all those who have been in the space. The Loyola Chapel has a rich and long history and I feel it is important to honour the heritage of its 77 year legacy. At the same time, there is tremendous value for the community in developing a space that is open for people to discover and practice their own connection to that which is called 'divine', 'sacred', and 'holy'. The question I have is: how do we identify and meet the religious and spiritual needs of the community and co-create a space that can support different practices and definitions of faith and spiritual expression? Can doing Yoga be an expression or interpretation of the Sacred? What about simply being in communion with nature? Or finding a deeper connection with one's divine expression through painting?

During a Chapel re-visioning session this summer, one of the participants reminded me how words can define and create us and our reality. She questioned whether 'spiritual' should be included in the vision statement, or whether 'chapel' was inclusive. She strongly felt that words like 'God' or 'sacred' carry powerful connotations that can limit people's potential to discover their own spiritual path and language to describe it. She felt that naming an experience as 'spiritual' or 'holy' would potentially hinder a person's ability to live that moment fully, possibly reducing and separating the person from the inherent value of their authentic experience. Sometimes we forget this — how language can limit our capacity to expand our knowledge and understanding of the world.

So what can we do? Perhaps we can create an opportunity to form *new* interpretations and shared understandings by bringing greater awareness to the meaning we attribute to words. This

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The Eucharist as a Way of Life

I have always had a profound fascination for the Eucharistic meal shared in Christian communities. Although the word Eucharist evokes different meanings in various faith paths, Scripture and the teachings of selected Catholic Church Fathers attest that the Eucharist is a way of life.

I notice that in Christian circles, believers define the Eucharist using different terms. Some call it a meal, the Breaking of Bread, the Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper. Others refer to it as the Body of Christ, a spiritual banquet, a mystical supper, a sacrifice of thanksgiving, or many other names. I also observe that most faith traditions in world religions take place around a sacred meal or food. Despite the different definitions associated with the Eucharist, the underlying point in all faith traditions is that Eucharist leads to a way life. Catholics, for example, see the Eucharist as an invitation to a way of life and a set of spiritual practices, as we can find reflected in Concordia Multi-faith Chaplaincy services. This invitation to a way of life is foreshadowed in certain Old Testament texts of the Bible.

In Proverbs 9:1-6, for example, we read that Yahweh invites the people to a perfect banquet. To describe the perfect banquet, the writer uses the number seven (this number symbolizes perfection, fullness, and completeness). Based on this backdrop, God offers perfect life to the people by promising to feed, to protect, and to admonish them with divine wisdom. This is an invitation to a way of life. Christians consider themselves as the people of God today. For some time now, I believe that Catholics, as well as Christians, can accept God's invitation to walk in the way of insight within the scheme of the Eucharist.

The invitation to God's banquet is an invitation to a way of life, specified also in John 6:51-61. John's Gospel emphasizes that the Eucharist is connected to the transforming redemptive death of Christ. For Catholics, to eat Christ's body is to feed on his life. This is why Catholics refer to the Eucharist as the Body of Christ. This is attested by the vocabulary used in John 6:51-61. I found in this text that John uses the Greek word "sarx" (flesh) in contrast to "soma" (body). Basically, to partake in the Eucharist (i.e., the flesh of Christ) is to be incorporated into the flesh or the fullness of Christ's humanity, life, and thought, so that the communicant shares in the divinity of Christ. Within the scheme of symbolism and imagery, Catholics affirm that those who receive the Eucharist become grafted into the fullness of life and thought of Christ. Communicants become united with Christ. To eat the Body (flesh) and drink the Blood of Christ will lead to the transformation of the very core of their lives. But these ideas about the Eucharist are only shared by Catholics and Anglicans within the Christian faith tradition. There is therefore a need to understand the Eucharist beyond the notion of a shared sacred food.

Catholics also believe that the Eucharist establishes communion of life between Christ and the communicant, between Christ and the Christian, and between Christ and the Catholic. They profess that the Eucharist is a way of life, because those who receive the Holy Communion cannot remain the same. The Catholic Church Fathers provide ample statements to confirm this theology.

St. Irenaeus, for example, says, "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." This affirms that the Eucharist is a way of life and thought. St. Justin states, "Those who take part in the Eucharist must live in keeping with what Christ taught." Most recently, Pope John Paul II says, "Jesus awaits us in this sacrament. Let us not refuse to go to meet him." St. John Chrysostom, one of the most outstanding preachers and orators ever in the history of Church homiletics, affirms the importance of tapping into the Eucharist. Because of his gift in preaching and oratory, he was nicknamed "Chrysostom" (golden lips or golden mouth). He prays in these edifying words: "O Son of God, bring me into communion with your mystical supper." This prayer is replete with vibes to follow a way of life that nourishes all our good potentials.

For the sake of the Eucharist, Catholics maintain that they need to lead a new way of life, in which they will be aware that prudent action is a hallmark of a Eucharistic life; they will be alert to God's design in their lives; and they will sing and make music to the Lord in their hearts, using harmonious words and melodious discourses. In Christian theology, although there are different meanings of the Eucharist, one thing is clear: each definition of the Eucharist only expresses an aspect of the way of life that Christians intend to cultivate more conscientiously.

On a personal note, Catholics can see autumn as the time to shed anything that impedes their potentials to live the Eucharistic way of life. Like the autumn foliage that changes before their very eyes, they can allow the Eucharist to influence their ways of life and thought, by drawing on the Eucharist as the source of wisdom to direct their thoughts, guide their paths, and propel their actions in this contemporary age where contrary ideas are constantly threatening to drown unwary persons. This is what some Concordia Catholics are attempting to do by organizing Eucharistic services, adorations, retreats, and talk series.

Fr. Paul Anyidoho,
Roman Catholic Chaplain

During the term, Roman Catholic Eucharist is celebrated on Thursdays from Noon to 1:00 PM in the Loyola Chapel

Language and the Loyola Chapel , continued from page 3

gesture can also help us recognize that others may not see things in the same way. One of the ways in which I am doing this in the Chapel's re-visioning process is through dialogue. I like asking questions to better understand the perspectives of others while seeking to uncover underlying assumptions that may inadvertently close genuine opportunities of communication and growth. This mindful process can be a uniting and empowered action that can change the way we interact with each other and the world around us.

Solomon Krueger
Loyola Chapel Development Officer

This article is inspired by conversations with my colleague Helen Downie, the Chapel Administrator.

Would you like to be involved with the Loyola Chapel?

There are many ways that you can be a part of the team. For more information contact:

Helen Downie at Ext. 3588
E-mail: chapel@alcor.concordia.ca

or Solomon Krueger at Ext. 3589
E-mail: skrueger@alcor.concordia.ca

Student Groups of a Spiritual or Religious Nature

- Chabad of NDG & Loyola Campus
- Concordia Association of Baha'i Studies
- Concordia Christian Fellowship
- Interfaith Ambassador Program
- Roman Catholic Student Association
- SGI Buddhist Club
- The Art of Living Club (Yoga)
- Thaqalayn Muslim Association
- Sikh Student Association
- The Muslim Student Association
- Campus for Christ

For more information on any of these groups go to:

http://chaplaincy.concordia.ca/community/religious-student-groups/

or check out the latest on-line edition of sources, which will be available from our web page shortly.

If you are a Concordia student or group who would like to pursue a spiritual path, Multi-faith Chaplaincy might be able to assist you or your group. Contact us at the coordinates on the back page for more information.

Mother Hubbard's Cupboard

On January 6, 2011,

Mother Hubbard is back in her kitchen.

Every Thursday evening until April 14, 2011 she will be cooking up her delicious and nutritious vegan meals in Annex Z from 5:00 to 7:00 PM.

All we ask for is a donation of $2 to help pay expenses!

So, come on in and bring your friends. Everyone is welcome!

Found in Translation:
Overcoming Language Barriers in Christian Witness

Washed with the blood of Christ." What does that mean? In the scriptures, catechisms and confessions, the Christian faith has many terms and metaphors simply undecipherable to non-Christians. Although edifying for churchgoers, what some refer to as "Jesus Jargon" or "Christianese" may hinder Christian outreach and witness.

Growing up in a Reformed Presbyterian household, I was exposed early on to the Bible's vocabulary and to church lingo. I did not understand it all at first, but with time and Sunday school, I came to grasp the metaphors and complex ideas.

Concepts about sin, sacrifice, forgiveness and salvation are often wrapped in heavy metaphors based on Hebrew translations and poetry. I believe this is an intrinsic part of scripture study and part of the beauty found in the passages of the Old and New Testament.

The challenge remains: How do I explain everything I know and believe to someone outside of my Christian circle? How can I get through to someone who doesn't know what sin means?

I realized I had been assuming my audience understood basic Christian terminology. I was also assuming people who were familiar with Christian concepts agreed with my definitions. I believe this is an issue many Christians face, especially in urban communities, where a variety of views and ideas confront each other within a secular structure, a structure that places thought and opinion in the irrelevant category because paradoxically meaning has become irrelevant.

Although the language of our time is different from that of the eyewitnesses who contributed to the Bible, the message is the

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WOUNDED WORDS

I serve a religious community that embraces theological diversity. Some of our members are believers in God, while others may call themselves humanists, agnostics or even atheists. Most of us would call ourselves seekers who gather together with shared values and the willingness to engage in dialogue.

Having no litmus test for faith, nor dogma or creed, means being open to many expressions and understandings of the mystery that brings us together. It means being open to hearing the language of others and making the effort to go beyond our own understandings and assumptions. I often say to my congregation that if we can't do this in our very own community, then what hope can we have for the world?

It's the small words that get under our skin, the words I have come to call "wounded words." These are the words of religion that may have been used to shame, frighten or restrict us. In that sense they are words that have actually wounded us. But wounded words can also be words that have been wounded themselves. They are words that have been co-opted by others, beautiful language stolen from us, limiting us in our means of communication.

As a child I lived with an incredible sense of awe and wonder. I can still remember every flower in my father's garden. I can still see the sidewalks made of shale, how they became rippled with time and erosion. I can see the fireflies we chased in the summer as dusk descended and we ran joyously wild. All these things were miraculous gifts from something I knew as God. Even then I struggled with that Sistine Chapel view of God as a man with a white beard in the clouds reaching his hand out to give life to Adam. My belief was deep and then it was taken away from me.

My family declared their atheism and even though they offered to leave room for me to pursue my faith, I was too young not to follow the people I loved. The word "God" became a wounded word for me, as I came of age in a time of social and political unrest. God was the indescribable, miraculous for me; but as others around me began to assert their God as a puppet master, I lost hold of that word. I let it go and I wandered through a spiritual desert for many years. I still struggle with this word, yet so often I am drawn to poetry that names and describes the God I remember from my childhood. Those poems make my heart sing.

Words like "religion," "prayer," and in fact most theological words have troubled me at one time or another. I remember the first professional workshop I attended when I was serving as a religious educator many years ago. The very first thing we were asked to do was to describe a personal religious experience. I was so stymied by this question that I could barely move on to the next activity.

"Religious experience?" That word "religious" bugged me. Somehow I couldn't get my mind around anything except a stereotyped notion of what was "religious." Finally, the group leader suggested that I think of "religious" in its Latin root "ligare" which means to bind together – like ligaments. Religion is simply what binds us together as a community.

"Prayer" was another word I stumbled over until I served as a hospital chaplain. There were times when prayer was the one gift I could bring to my patients. They taught me the beauty of prayer. It was freeing to move beyond meditation to invite healing words into the sterile hospital environment.

Meditation is a silent emptying of the mind, a connecting with breath, a practice I find life saving. But the practice of prayer has come to touch me in a different way. It is a sending out to something beyond myself. It is a humble recognition that I don't have all the answers. Some days I imagine that my prayers are going out to a loving God who is laughing or weeping with me. Other days, I'm not so sure.

A while ago I heard an interview with Richard Holloway, Scottish writer and former Bishop of Edinburgh. He called himself reverently agnostic, and that, I thought, is really where I stand most days. Holloway told his interviewer, "I'd rather see a moral atheist than an immoral theist." And me? Well, I dream of moral atheists and moral theists and everyone in between finding a way to speak with words that open and clarify understanding. That's the welcoming space I want to hold sacred.

No matter what our religious traditions may be, I believe that so many of us are striving to find the heart language that reaches across the boundaries that separate us. Words are powerful and words are imprecise. It takes a lot of patience and openness to truly hear each other.

Rev. Diane Rollert
Unitarian Associate
Unitarian Church of Montreal

Mother Hubbard needs you!

There is always help needed both in preparation and during the meal itself. If you would like to be involved in this really great program contact Keawe, our Mo' Hubb's coordinator, at: *mohubbs@alcor.concordia.ca*

sources...
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The Interfaith Ambassador Program

Sacred Sites

Sacred Dialogues

- to learn about faith and spirituality
- to build community

Spring Retreat

- to gain insight into interfaith issues

Experience time away in community.
Register soon!

For more information on the IAP or any of its programs, Contact:
Laura Gallo *(lgallo@alcor.concordia.ca)*
Rev. Ellie Hummel *(Ellie.Hummel@concordia.ca)*
by e-mail: interfaith.concordia@gmail.com
or visit: chaplaincy.concordia.ca/interfaith-ambassador-program

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same. We have their accounts – the Bible as well as the same Holy Spirit they had to interpret the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul says in his letter to the church in Colossus:

> *Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.* (Colossians 2: 2-4, New living Translation)

The Holy Spirit helps us get across to our audience and helps us find the rights words to be as clear as possible. The Bible also gives advice to listeners:

> *Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given – and you will receive even more.* (Mark 4: 24, New Living Translation)

The fear of oversimplifying and losing the Gospel message coexists with the fear of losing your audience's attention. Regardless of the approach, one constant remains: Witness. Saying what is true, that which has been lived and seen remains at the core. The words are there because the reality is there. There is something to describe. As Francis Schaeffer wrote about God: "He is there and he is not silent." So we shouldn't be either.

Andrea Zoellner
Journalism

Stories that Light our Path

Mondays, 12:45 - 2:00 PM, Annex Z, Room 02,
with Rev. Ellie Hummel
Beginning January 17, 2011

Cover Image

Our cover is from a project of the Centre for Arts in Human Development. It is a detail cropped from the image shown here, created by adults with developmental and related disabilities. This issue of sources is all about words and how different populations and cultures use them. This image speaks of how this group uses their art work to express thoughts and feelings in a way that goes beyond conventional words or language.

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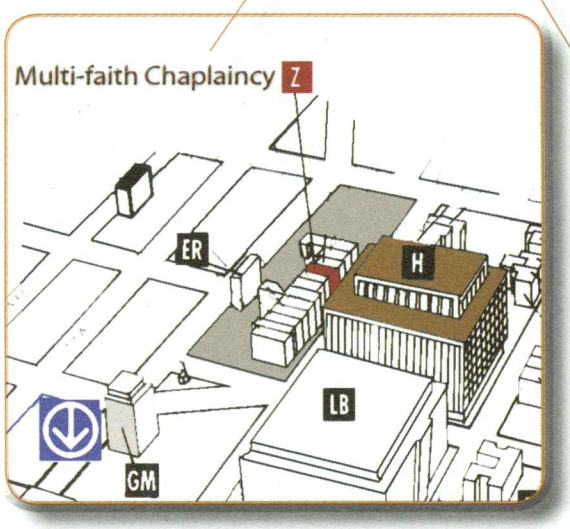
Front row: **Ilona Weinstein, Imam Salam Elmenyawi, Tracey Fisher, Bernie Glover**; Back row: **Rabbi Yisroel Bernath, Dr. T.S. Rukmani, Myōkyō Judith McLean, Laura Gallo, Rev. Ellie Hummel, Manjit Singh**

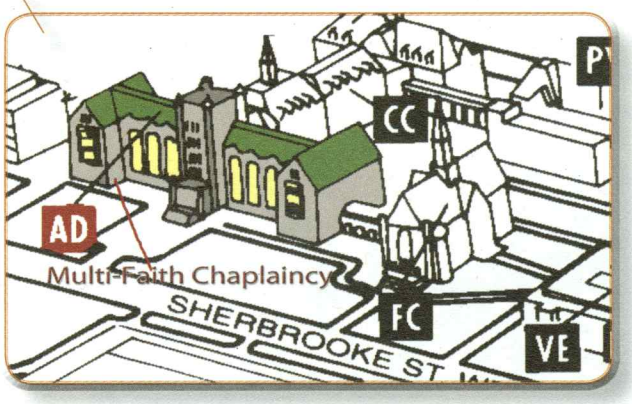
Not in this picture: Fr. Paul Anyidoho and Rev. Diane Rollert

Why not drop in?

You will always find a warm welcome at Multi-faith Chaplaincy!

SGW: Annex Z (2090 Mackay, across from the Hall bldg.)
Loyola: Administration Building L-AD 130
If you would like to call ahead, dial (514) 848-2424 and enter the desired extension at the prompt.





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For more information about days, times, and locations of all of our programs offered by and through Multi-faith Chaplaincy check out the "Programs & Groups" link on our web site:
http://chaplaincy.concordia.ca/